THE TIMES OF INDIA

TUESDAY

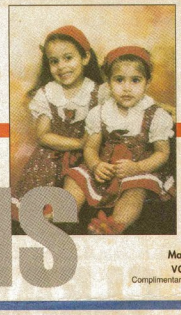
Westside Plus

APRIL 3, 2001

Make the most of where you live
VOLUME NO. 1, ISSUE NO 108
Complimentary to the readers of The Times of India from Bandra to Virar only

The master of rhythm

Eurostyle summer



Bubble dreams

STRAIGHT ANSWERS

Ashok Mehta
Sheriff, Mumbai
On the welfare of Mumbaikars during his tenure

What are your plans as the sheriff of Mumbai?
The sheriff's role is to effectively oversee that government welfare schemes are helping the common man. He basically belongs to an NGO organisation. My original plan was to keep the city clean and green, but now I have embarked on an HIV and AIDS awareness programme. Yet another major issue that I will focus on is the Disaster Management Plan.

What specifically are you planning to do about the Disaster Management Programme?
Mumbaikars must know what to do in case if any disaster strikes Mumbai. They must be aware of the disaster management plan, the persons to be contacted and the action to be taken. Time and again there

have been plans, but there is a need to be able to practically implement it. Discussions are on in this regard with the authorities and momentum will be pick up by next month.

What has been your contribution to the Clean Mumbai campaign?
As sheriff, I don't have funds to carry out the activities pertaining to the campaign. However due to my proximity with the Lions International and other NGOs, several projects have been planned. My aim is to effect citizen participation. If citizens own up responsibility to keep the area in the vicinity of their houses clean and resolve not to throw garbage on the streets the campaign will get the much required fillip.

Do you really believe that the people can make a difference?
It is the people who are going to shape the future. We cannot expect the government machinery alone to sweep up a miracle. Once we realise a clean Mumbai is part of our common goal, we can give the city a new, spanking clean look.

Srinivas Iyer

MJP meters down claim, refunds MBMC for excess billing

S Chakraborthy
Mira Road

LEAVE alone adequate water supply for its entire population, the twin townships of Mira Road and Bhayander have been receiving short supply of water even from the quantity that is actually due to it. This came to light only after the Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran (MJP) officials installed meters to measure the volume of water supply being given to Mira-Bhayander Municipal Corporation. With the MJP officials having charged the MBMC for higher volumes in the past, they have agreed to refund the sum of Rs 62 lakh charged excessively to the corporation.

Currently, the two townships with a population of about five lakh, require at least 66 mld of water. However, the townships are allotted a quota of only 31 mld of water, the supply of which is also not being given.

After repeated complaints by the MBMC officials that it is not receiving the 31 mld water due to it, MJP installed meters about three months back to verify its claim. Subsequently, it came to light that Mira-Bhayander is actually receiving only 23- 24 mld, with the highest volume recorded in the last three months being only 26 mld. On investigations, it came to light that almost 6-8 mld of water is being siphoned along the route by the villages that come under the jurisdiction of Thane Municipal Corporation. However, MJP has been charging MBMC for the entire volume of 31 mld till date, with the difference amounting to Rs 62 lakhs.

The MJP officials will now adjust the excess payments in the future bills, saving the corporation the sum of Rs 62 lakh from the civic budget.

With the Temghar water project partly operational now, the twin townships of Mira-Bhayander will receive an additional supply of 15-20 mld by mid-April. The increased water supply will give residents of Mira road and Bhayander some respite this summer, compared to the situation till last year, when the water scarcity was acute.

Vivek Sarambalkar

HUM BHI HAIN JOSH MEIN: Jasmeet, Julius and Jolly of Joshilay, best remembered for their popular single *Munia* take a break while shooting for their new video

Time to take cover

Latha Warrier
Borivali

COME June and it will be time to plant trees in the city, especially at Borivali National Park (BNP) where in a rare reversal of the usual trend, the concrete jungle was broken down to make way for nature.

A few years ago, the forest department with active support from organisations like the Bombay Environment Action Group, started reclaiming land from encroachments. Since then hundreds of acres of land have been cleared of settlements and will be ready for reforestation this year.

One of the major problems with reforestation is getting the right trees. After all, a national park is supposed to maintain the bio-diversity of the region. In an attempt to maintain the delicate balance of nature, groups working in the area are growing saplings that are indigenous to the BNP and replicating, where possible, the original vegetation of this forest.

Kedar Bhat

The Western Paragliding Association, a flying school has taken the initiative to collect seeds and raise specially chosen saplings for the reforestation programme. Students of St. Xavier's College, especially the commerce stream, where seed collection was made part of the academic programme, have also helped gather more than a hundred thousand seeds towards this programme.

The seeds are being raised by the forest department. Already 50,000 saplings are ready and it is hoped that another 50,000 will be ready by June, in time for the monsoons when they will be planted in the recovered areas of the BNP. Mr Srinivasan, eminent orchid and cactus specialist, has also been growing saplings independently. While several corporates offered to raise saplings for the programme, the progress made by them has been miniscule. An interesting aspect of this project is an effort to manage everything with little or no funding. Initially, Pavan Sukhdev, a Singapore-based NRI underwrote the entire seed collection. However, since the seeds were collected entirely by voluntary effort no expenses were incurred.

While the initial thrust of the effort is to see that the reclaimed areas of the park are duly forested, it is hoped that this will expand in the future to reforesting of vital corridors that connect our park with the jungles beyond.

To achieve this objective, a trust called GIFT (Green India & Forests Trust) will be closely associated with this reforestation effort. GIFT trustees will use the opportunity to interact with organisations involved in the current effort while seeking partners for projects that are now being planned.

Seed collection and raising of saplings are an ongoing effort and since the programme is loosely structured, volunteers, corporates and NGOs can freely participate. Anybody who cares about the environment is welcome to join in the seed collection programme and corporates who have the infrastructure can help by raising a few thousand trees towards the effort so that the bulk of the work can be completed this year.

In a few days it will be time to start digging pits for the saplings, and the task is a gigantic one. Financial assistance will be required to do the actual tree planting, but voluntary efforts will still form the backbone of this project. *Those interested in helping could phone 8860751or mail admin@airandadventure.com*

Mystery surrounds the death of three Chota Rajan associates gunned down by the police

An encounter which may not have been

A correspondent
Andheri

MYSTERY surrounds the triple encounter wherein the police in Mulund shot down three gangsters, allegedly belonging to the Chota Rajan gang. According to sources, the gangsters were allegedly picked up at Andheri and shot at an undisclosed destination, before they were brought to Mulund to indicate that the encounter actually took place there.

What is perhaps more intriguing is the fact that while the police have reported that the gun battle between the cops and the gangsters had gone on for ten whole minutes, none of the residents living within 40 minutes of the encounter site heard it. The place is just opposite the Mulund fire brigade station and is in close vicinity of a residential cluster. As a matter of fact the spot is very near the Johnson and Johnson factory.

The "so-called" encounter took place at a time when the area remains highly crowded with couples sharing intimate moments inside the Johnson garden. Hundreds of people use the boundary walls as a vantage point for meeting friends. In this situation, it is practically impossible for such a big incident to go unnoticed.

"A police jeep was stationed near the company gate bordering the garden from 9 pm onwards and no one was allowed to enter that side of the garden or even pass through the road. Those already in that part were asked to move to the other end some 200 metres away," said NA Panjwani, a resident of the nearby Sindhi Colony. "I was surprised to read the news of a mega encounter on Monday morning", he added. He denied hearing any gunshots or noticing any commotion around 9.30 pm, the time when the encounter reportedly took place. All he noticed was a few police vans arriving on the spot and going away towards Mulund hospital within minutes.

Local residents of nearby buildings overlooking the spot also denied hearing any gunshots or even police whistles. "There was unusual police movements but no commotion or gunfire," said a fireman attached to the fire brigade station. He was on night duty from 8 pm onwards.

The encounter was carried out by the crime intelligence unit of the crime branch, Andheri. The deceased were identified as Rajesh Pande, Bipin Mishra and Javed.

According to the police the trio were involved in a series of serious crimes including murders in the western suburbs. The trio were also suspected of being involved in the murders of a shakha pramukh from Goregaon in 1999 followed by that of a pan vendor from Bandra and an STD booth owner from Mira Road. The slain gangsters are also said to be involved in an incident where they allegedly fired on a youth near Gaiety Cinema, Bandra.

One interesting thing about the slain gangsters was that they had never missed a target in the past. This time however they fired six rounds at the police from almost point blank range without even hitting their vehicles or the boundary walls of the garden or anywhere around. Not even a single drop of blood was visible at the site after the alleged encounter took place.

The police delay in making the news public also adds to the suspicion surrounding the story.

Accused issued type-written ransom demands and claimed to a close aide of Guru Satam

Extortion bid fails, watchman lands behind bars

Asadullah Hanfi
Bandra

HE used to threaten the complainant in the voice of underworld don Guru Satam and demand a ransom of Rs 5 lakh. Apart from calling up the complainant he also sent type written letters as part of his strategy. The cops were surprised to discover that the accused was the former watchman of the complainant's residential society. The complainant, employed as a traffic assistant with Gulf Air, used to get threatening calls to his residence from some unknown person claiming to be Mansingh Yadav, a close associate of underworld don, Guru Satam. At times even 'Guru Satam' directly called up the complainant to press him into paying the amount.

A complaint was lodged with the Anti Extortion Cell (AEC), Bandra which began investigations into the case. The voice of the caller was audio-taped and matched with that of Guru Satam and other gangsters on record but it did not match with anyone. The police traced a large number of calls to PCOs at Khar and Bandra.

A trap was laid on March 20 and the cops nabbed a youth calling from a PCO at 1st road, Khar around 10.30 am. The accused gave his name as Mansingh Yadav.

Detailed interrogation however revealed that his real name was Kalishankar Singh alias Pappu Singh. He had organised the extortion racket along with one Guddu Khan, a resident of Mirzapur, UP.

Kalishankar's cousin brother, Ramashankar used to work as a watchman in the housing society of the complainant for three to four years. Ramashankar left the job some five years ago after the society decided not keep a watchman at all. During his service Ramashankar had to visit his native place UP for a month so he asked Kalishankar to substitute for him in his absence.

The accused kept a watch on the wealth and properties of the society residents and shortlisted the complainant for his future plans.

"The accused does not have a previous criminal record here. We are trying to get his background details from his native place in Uttar Pradesh. The other accused is absconding," said police sub inspector, Sudhir Dalvi, of the AEC.

DHEERAJ UPVAN
Kandivali (E)
bird's eye view of the complex

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THE 'BURBS
KEITH FRANCIS

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITIES

Ajit Ramachandran
Bandra

WITHIN the stylish confines of her store, Comall Sunjoy expounds with discernible pride on her merchandise. Inspired by the zealous reactions to her expertise in four exhibitions (Society Collection, Inside Outside, Times Utsav), Comall channelised her efforts, culminating in her store, Tresor.

"My speciality is *jharokhas* of different sizes, which can have various end uses. They can also be custom-made to suit individual tastes," says Comall.

Besides, there are gem stone hand-made paintings which use precious and semi-precious stones (amethyst, garnet, turquoise, etc) and gemstone motif boxes too. The wood-and-iron combination semi-contemporary objects (key boxes, CD racks, others), carved iron pots and jewellery paintings on marble are quite unlike what you get elsewhere. "I also make custom-made bags and shoes, since I used to design and sell garments earlier," she states.

The uncanny name-resemblance to Tresorie' has Comall issuing disclaimers vehemently. "No, I'm not trying to capitalise on their name.

Comall sheds light on the other highlights amongst her wares. "I have wooden furniture which is given a carved and embossed metal finish, it ends up looking like metal. Then there are items made of brass which are silver-plated and given a melamine finish to ensure their durability, intricately handcrafted furniture, console sets, almaris, peeda chairs, bar chests and centre tables. Maintenance is easy, carvings need to be brushed regularly and pots dusted with a clean flan.